

Sonoma

State Historic Park



Our Mission

The mission of the California Department of Parks and Recreation is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.

GRAY DAVIS
Governor

MARY D. NICHOLS
Secretary for Resources

RUSTY AREIAS
Director, California State Parks



California State Parks does not discriminate against individuals with disabilities. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the park at the phone number below. To receive this publication in an alternate format, write to the Communications Office at the following address.

**CALIFORNIA
STATE PARKS**
P.O. Box 942896

For information call:
800-777-0369
916-653-6995, outside the U.S.
711, TTY relay service

Sonoma State Historic Park
363 3rd Street West
Sonoma, CA 95476
(707) 938-9560



*The city of Sonoma is
home to Sonoma State
Historic Park—site of
the northernmost
Franciscan Mission in
California and birthplace
of the California State
Bear Flag.*



The historic, picturesque town of Sonoma

is located in the heart of the beautiful wine country between Napa and Santa Rosa off Highway 12. Situated around a central plaza (the largest of its kind in California) filled with charming shops and restaurants, the city is home to Sonoma State Historic Park—site of the northernmost Franciscan Mission in California and birthplace of the California State Bear Flag.

Unlike most parks with a plot of land and geographical boundaries, Sonoma State Historic Park is a series of historic attractions in several locations within the community. The park is comprised of six sites: the Mission San Francisco Solano de Sonoma, the Blue Wing Inn, the Sonoma Barracks, the Toscano Hotel, as well as La Casa Grande and Lachryma Montis, the homes of General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, Military Commander and Director of Colonization of the Northern Frontier.

MISSION SAN FRANCISCO SOLANO DE SONOMA

Mission San Francisco Solano was the last established mission in California and the only one established under Mexico. The site was selected and consecrated by Father José Altimira on July 4, 1823.

On April 4, 1824, a temporary wooden chapel was dedicated and the first baptisms performed.



Mission San Francisco Solano de Sonoma chapel altar



Mission Chapel and Padres' Quarters

In 1825 a long, low adobe wing for the Padres' Quarters was completed. Much neglected over the years and then partially reconstructed, this building, which stands east of the present chapel, is the oldest building in Sonoma.

Father Buenaventura Fortuni, who remained at Sonoma from 1826 to 1833, continued Father Altimira's work. Under his direction, the foundation for a large adobe church was laid just east of the Padres' Quarters in 1827. The mission reached peak prosperity around 1832, with nearly 1,000

Native Americans in residence and 10,000 acres of land used to raise crops and livestock.

In 1834, however, the Mexican government secularized all the missions into parish churches. After 11 years of existence, the Sonoma Mission began a decline that ended in its collapse in the late 1830s. An adobe chapel on the west side of the Padres' Quarters, built and furnished by General Vallejo, replaced the mission.

After 1881 the chapel and its adjoining residence buildings were sold by the church and used variously as a hay barn, a winery and a blacksmith shop. The collection of buildings became a state monument when the Historic Landmarks League purchased them in 1903. They





Site of Mission San Francisco Solano de Sonoma

became state property in 1906, the same year they sustained major earthquake damage. In 1909 basic restoration work was begun and carried out in various phases over the years. William Randolph Hearst and celebrated architect Julia Morgan were among those involved in the restoration. Archeological investigation and restoration programs are still undertaken from time to time under state direction.

Inside the mission, visitors can view exhibits of mission life, including religious paintings and artifacts, as well as beautiful, framed watercolors of all the California missions by artist Chris Jorgensen. In 1999 a monument was erected on the west side adjacent to the mission in honor of the 896 Native Americans who are buried there. A Native American shaman and a bishop from the Catholic Church blessed this sacred burial site.

In a quiet courtyard behind the Mission are olive trees, a wall of cactus that dates back to Mission days, and wooden benches around a small fountain where visitors can sit and rest. On Thursdays school children learn to make Native American-style baskets and candles in the courtyard.



THE BLUE WING INN

This long, two-story adobe building just across from the Mission derives its name from a gambling saloon and hotel of the Gold Rush era. Portions of the building were originally constructed to house soldiers assigned to the Sonoma Mission, and these structures were joined together and a second story added at a later date.



The Blue Wing Inn

Among the most famous visitors to the Blue Wing Inn were noted actress Lotta Crabtree and U.S. Army officer Ulysses S. Grant (later to become a U.S. president). The building was acquired by the state in 1968. In recent years, it has been used for residential apartments and is currently under renovation by California State Parks.

SONOMA BARRACKS

The two-story adobe barracks facing Sonoma's central plaza was built to house Mexican army troops after General Vallejo moved his garrison from the Presidio at San Francisco to Sonoma. Actual construction of the barracks probably took place in stages after the troops arrived in 1834, and was completed in 1841. In the years following 1835, more than 100 military expeditions set out from Sonoma with the object of subduing the Wapos, Cainameros, or Satsiyomis Indians who rose up more than once trying to throw off Mexican domination of the country around Sonoma. From 1834 to 1846, Sonoma was the headquarters of the commandant of the Frontera del Norte—the Mexican provincial frontier of the north.

During the days of the short-lived California Republic, the barracks housed a number of its followers until July 9, 1846, when the Stars and Stripes were first raised at Sonoma. Thereafter, various U.S. military forces used the barracks. In May 1849, a 37-man company of U.S. Dragoons moved into the building and established Camp Sonoma. Throughout the next few years, Sonoma continued to be an important army post.

In 1860 Vallejo remodeled the building to serve as a winery. In later years under other owners, it was used as a store, a law office and a private residence. The barracks



Interior of the Barracks

was purchased by the State in 1958 and partially restored.

A wheelchair-accessible indoor theater offers a video detailing the history of the mission, General Vallejo and the Bear Flag Revolt. Visitors can also see a copy of the first Bear Flag, whose red-striped bottom border is said to have been made from a woman's petticoat.

The Barracks Books and Giftstore offers a wide variety of books on Native American life, Mexican and early American history, and the California missions.



Courtyard behind the Barracks

For ten years, until 1844, the Presidial company at Sonoma was generally the most powerful military force in California.





Two-story servant's wing of La Casa Grande

LA CASA GRANDE

General Vallejo, who directed Sonoma's development until 1846, built his first home, La Casa Grande—one of the most imposing and well-furnished private residences in California—in the middle of the block with its wide second-story balcony overlooking the Plaza. The house was

finished in 1840. Over the years a continual stream of distinguished visitors from many parts of the world helped to make La Casa Grande the center of social and diplomatic life north of San Francisco Bay.

On the morning of June 14, 1846, in a bid to “capture” the unarmed and unresisting Pueblo of Sonoma, a group of 30 to 40 American settlers and frontiersmen known as the Bear Flag Party “arrested” General Vallejo at La Casa Grande and had him imprisoned at Sutter's Fort. They announced the establishment of a free and independent Republic of California and raised a new, homemade flag—the Bear Flag—in the Plaza over Sonoma.

Originally built in an L-shape, the main wing of La Casa Grande was destroyed by fire on February 12, 1867, leaving only the two-story servants' wing standing today.



The raising of a new, homemade flag –the Bear Flag–in the Plaza over Sonoma



Toscano Hotel

TOSCANO HOTEL

The wood-frame building between La Casa Grande and the barracks was constructed during the 1850s, when it housed, among other things, a retail store and rental library. Later the building served a working-class clientele as an inexpensive hotel. Around 1890, when many of its customers were Italian immigrants, the Ciucci family changed the name of the hotel from “Eureka” to Toscano.

Today the Toscano is furnished with beautiful period furniture and looks much the way it did around the turn of the century. A bar downstairs is set up with old card tables and chairs, while antique-framed photos and whatnots dot the walls. Inside the kitchen and dining room (in a separate building behind the one facing the plaza), tables set with blue-and-white checked cloths and a menu board announcing the day's specials make visitors feel as if lunch is about to be served.

VALLEJO HOME—LACHRYMA MONTIS

In 1850 General Vallejo, now an elected State Senator, purchased some acreage at the foot of the hills, one-half mile west and north of Sonoma's central plaza. The land surrounded a fine, free-flowing spring that the Indians had called Chiucuyem (tears of the mountain). Vallejo retained this name for his new estate, but translated it into Latin, Lachryma Montis.

The beautiful Gothic-style American-Victorian house began as a prefabricated wooden structure manufactured in the northeast and shipped around the Horn. Notable features of the home are the twin porches, dormer and Gothic windows, and fanciful ornamental trim along the eaves.

Near the main house, a special warehouse—also of prefabricated construction—was erected to store wine, fruit, and other produce. Eventually the half-timbered building was converted to residential use and came to be known as the “Chalet.” Today the Chalet serves as the park's Visitor Center and Museum.



A stone and masonry reservoir developed by Vallejo for fresh water delivery was built behind the main house. It collected the water from the natural artesian springs in the hills above (tears of the mountain). Today visitors can stop and rest beneath the vine-covered arbor outside the reservoir and watch turtles happily paddling through the water.

Vallejo with two daughters and three granddaughters



The Chalet

Other buildings on the property include the Hermitage (often called “Napoleon's Cottage” after General Vallejo's youngest son) atop a winding stone staircase behind the reservoir. Here Napoleon kept a menagerie of beloved pets—at one time totaling 14 dogs, several cats and a parrot.

“El Delirio,” whose name suggests a place of bliss and ecstasy, is the pretty garden pavilion west of the main home. Here, Vallejo rewrote his “La Historia de California.” A lovely cast iron swan fountain graces the front of the residence. Once used as a guest cottage, it invites visitors to stop and enjoy a few moments of tranquillity.

In 1933 the Vallejo home and some 20 acres of the original Lachryma Montis lands were acquired by the State in order to protect and preserve this historic site.



Vallejo Home—Lachryma Montis

PLEASE REMEMBER

- Operating hours are 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily.
- Weather can be changeable; layered clothing is recommended.
- Parking is free in the large lot behind the Toscano Hotel and Sonoma Barracks.
- Restrooms are available in the mission and behind the Toscano Hotel.

The park provides tours for both the general public and for school students. School tour reservations must be made seven days in advance by calling (866) 240-4655. Regularly scheduled docent-led tours are available every Friday, Saturday and Sunday. For more information, call (707) 938-9560.

ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

The Sonoma Mission, Barracks, and Toscano Hotel are at least partly accessible, sometimes with assistance at historic entries. Video tours of the Vallejo Home and the Mission are available. An accessible restroom is located in the Barn Casa Grande, on Spain Street next to the District Office. No parking is provided by the State, but a city parking lot includes designated accessible spaces. For more information, call (707) 938-9560.



In order to serve as a buffer to Russian expansion from Fort Ross, Mexican soldiers came from the Presidio of San Francisco in 1834 and created a new military post on the northern frontier.



This park is supported in part through a nonprofit organization. For more information contact:

Sonoma State Historic Park Association
20 East Spain Street
Sonoma, Ca 95476
(707) 939-9420

NEARBY PARKS

- Petaluma Adobe State Historic Park
0.7 miles east of Petaluma
(707) 762-4871
- Jack London State Historic Park
20 minutes north of Sonoma
(707) 938-5216
- Olompali State Historic Park,
3 miles north of Novato on U.S. 101
(415) 892-3383

Sonoma
State Historic Park

Legend

- Trail
- Park Building
- Bicycle Trail
- Parking
- Restrooms
- Accessible Feature

